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WOMEN IN INDUSTRY: THE CHICAGO STOCKYARDS

The question of the employment of women in the stockyards is a question of their connection not with one but with a number of trades. Slaughtering and the preparation of dressed meat; the preparation and canning of "prepared meat products"; and the manufacture of a variety of by-products under modern methods of industrial and commercial organization, carried on "in the yards" as if they were a single industry. Historically the business of slaughtering and of packing meat products is "men's work," and some account of the development of the industry is necessary in order to understand how it has become possible to utilize women's labor in any part of it. Before the invention of refrigeration processes and the refrigerator car, the packing of beef and mutton was not practicable on any extensive scale.¹ Although methods of curing pork products were early devised, the fact that even the "mess pork" was for a long time called "sow belly" indicates its quality. Pork packing, however, had become an important industry when it still continued to be impracticable to slaughter cattle or sheep except near the places where they were to be consumed.² So long as the preparation of meat was a local industry carried on for local markets by local butchers, there was of course no field for the employment of women. Slaughtering and butchering were regarded as work suitable only for men. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, however, the old methods gradually disappeared. In the new industry, organized on a large scale, and concentrated in a small number of centers,³ a minute sub-

¹ Crude packing was of course carried on and a kind of barreled beef known as "salt horse" was a product on the market before 1830.

² See the *Report of the Commissioner of Corporations on the Beef Industry* (March 2, 1905), pp. 1-14, for the history of the industry.

³ See the report referred to in the preceding note for an account of the westward movement of the industry, the growth of the five great packing centers, Chicago, Kansas City, South Omaha, East St. Louis, and St. Joseph, and the effect on the industry of the invention of refrigeration processes: "It was cheaper to kill live stock in the West near the main source of supply, than to carry them East for slaughter. The most important saving was in the freight charges, only the valuable part of the animal now being transported without the waste."

division of labor created new occupations and made possible the utilization of women's labor.

The history of the meat industry in Chicago is nearly as old as the city itself. Slaughtering operations began here in 1823, and crude packing operations were carried on in 1827 south of the north branch of the Chicago River on Clybourn Avenue. Different "stockyards" were established from time to time in various parts of the city⁴ but these were largely centers from which cattle were shipped to eastern markets. Before 1860 the center of the meat industry was in the Ohio Valley with headquarters in Cincinnati, but during the following decade Chicago showed promise of gaining a position of supremacy.

The decade from 1860 to 1870 is the most significant in the history of the growth of the packing industry in Chicago. The year 1865 saw the opening of the Union Stockyards, a great tract of 320 acres near the south branch of the river, destined to become the center of the slaughtering and packing industry in the West. In 1868 a refrigerator car was patented and in the autumn of 1869 fresh beef was shipped for the first time from Chicago to Boston. The success of the refrigeration experiments which made it possible to ship only the dressed meat and save the freight charges of transporting the heavy waste products⁵ was a great factor in the development of the meat-packing industry on a large scale in the West. In Chicago, as in other leading packing centers, the growth of the industry has meant concentration. After the establishment

⁴ In 1832 slaughtering and packing were industries located on what was then an open prairie near Michigan and Madison streets, and at later dates packing centers were established at Lake and La Salle streets, at Rush and Kinzie, on South Water between Clark and La Salle, at State and North Water, at Franklin and South Water. In 1848 the "Bull's Head" Yard on Madison and Ogden became the center of the trade in livestock. In 1856 the Sherman Yards were established on Cottage Grove Avenue and in 1858 the Michigan Southern and Fort Wayne Yards were opened at State and Twenty-second streets.

⁵ See the *Report of the Commissioner of Corporations on the Beef Industry* (March 2, 1905), p. 6: "The influence of the introduction of refrigeration is seen conspicuously in the subsequent rapid increase in the number of cattle and sheep killed at Chicago, at which city the method was first extensively developed. The number of cattle slaughtered in Chicago rose from 224,309 in 1875 to 495,863 in 1880, and to 1,161,425 in 1885. The transportation of mutton in refrigerator cars began somewhat later than that of beef. The number of sheep slaughtered in Chicago was only 179,292 in 1880, while in 1885 it had risen to 743,321, and by 1891 to about double that number."

of the Union Stockyards as a central market to which cattle and hogs could be shipped from all over the West, it was, of course, inevitable that packing houses to which the animals could be immediately delivered after purchase should be established in the yards. During the decade between 1870-80, canning was undertaken on a large scale and in the next ten years the preparation of by-products became important and caused the growth of a large number of allied industries which were, of course, concentrated along with slaughtering in the hands of a few large companies.

In place of the old primitive slaughterhouse where one man killed a few animals and prepared the meat for sale, the changes of the last half century have substituted the great modern establishment in which the work of slaughtering and packing has been minutely subdivided and machinery devised for a large number of processes. In this, as in other industries in which work was originally monopolized by men because it was thought unsuitable for women, the division of labor and the invention of machinery have so reorganized the industry that a large number of processes have been discovered at which women may be successfully employed. In this respect the slaughtering and meat-packing industry has had a history very much like that of the manufacture of boots and shoes. The early boot and shoe makers were men, because "cobbling" was heavy work for women, but the subdivision of labor made it profitable to employ women for binding and stitching the shoe "uppers" and the invention of machinery provided a great variety of occupations in connection with the manufacture of shoes which have become "women's work."

The packing industry, however, has been in a measure unique because the early exclusion of women was due to the repulsive character of the work as well as to the fact that physical strength was required. It has seemed worth while, therefore, not only for this reason but also because of the increasing importance of women's work in this industry, to inquire how far it retains its old offensive character, and whether it still seems to be work unsuitable for women. This discussion will also involve a consideration of such questions as the division of labor that has

come about between men and women, the character of the work done by women and the character of the women who do the work.

Because the Chicago stockyards are believed to be typical and are at the same time more extensive and important than those of any other city⁶ this study is confined exclusively to Chicago conditions. Statistics for the country as a whole are presented in order that the relative position of the industry in Chicago may be correctly understood. The following table, which has been compiled from the Census of manufactures published in 1905, shows the relative numbers of men and women employed in the United States as a whole and in the city of Chicago at that time:

TABLE I
AVERAGE NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES IN "COMBINED SLAUGHTERING AND MEAT-PACKING," 1905, IN CHICAGO, AND IN THE UNITED STATES OUTSIDE OF CHICAGO*

WAGE-EARNERS	NUMBER		PERCENTAGE	
	United States Outside Chicago	Chicago	United States Outside Chicago	Chicago
Men over 16.....	48,835	19,857	94.4	88.7
Women over 16.....	1,991	2,477	3.8	11.1
Children under 16.....	917	57	1.8	.2
Total.....	51,743	22,391	100	100

* Compiled from the 1905 *Census of Manufactures*, Part III, 459, and Part II, 236.

Attention should be called to two interesting facts which appear in this table: (1) that more women are employed in the Chicago stockyards than in all of the other packing centers of the country combined; (2) that the proportion of women to men is higher in Chicago than elsewhere; that is, 11.1 per cent of all the packing-house employees in Chicago are women as compared with 3.8 per cent in the United States outside of Chicago. This larger percentage of women employees in Chicago is undoubt-

⁶ The comment of the last census of manufactures was that "to a certain extent the industry and the city are synonymous, and in no other city has the industry assumed the proportions it has in Chicago, which has come to be looked upon as the meat market of the United States" (1905 *Census of Manufactures*, Part II, 220).

edly due to the fact that the industry is carried on here on a larger scale and that with increasing concentration more occupations suitable for women are developed. The following table, which shows the rapid increase in the number of women employed in the industry since 1890, is also of interest:

TABLE II
AVERAGE NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES IN "COMBINED SLAUGHTERING AND MEAT-PACKING," 1890-1905, IN THE UNITED STATES*

WAGE-EARNERS	NUMBER			PERCENTAGE		
	1890	1900	1905	1890	1900	1905
Men 16 years and over.....	42,285	63,774	68,692	96	93	93
Women 16 years and over....	990	2,945	4,468	2	4	6
Children under 16.....	700	1,667	974	2	3	1
Total.....	43,975	68,386	74,134	100	100	100

* Compiled from *1905 Census of Manufactures*, III, 459. The data for the earlier decades from 1850 to 1880 which are here also given in the census table are omitted here because they are not comparable with the data for more recent census years and because so few women were employed before 1890 that the earlier data are not of interest for the purpose of this study. These data *all* relate to establishments engaged in both slaughtering and packing and not to those engaged in slaughtering alone. In 1905, "slaughtering, wholesale, not including meat-packing," employed 4,521 men, a woman, and 11 children under 16 (p. 480).

This table not only shows a striking increase in the number of women employed, but it indicates that this increase was greater relatively than the increase in the number of men. In 1905, 6 per cent of all employees were women in comparison with 4 per cent in 1900 and 2 per cent in 1890. It is clear, therefore, that the number of women in the various packing-houses in the United States has been increasing in the last fifteen years both relatively and absolutely. This increase, moreover, has been especially rapid in Chicago, where the stockyards employ more women than any other industry in the city, except "printing and publishing" and, of course, the sewing trades.⁷ Chicago is so largely a center for men's industries that there is here a tendency to use women for work which would be done by men in other cities. This may be in part at least an explanation of the ready substitution of women for men which, as the following discussion

⁷ See *Report of the Commissioner of Labor on the Condition of Woman and Child Wage-Earners in the United States*, II, 20.

points out, has occurred from time to time in various departments in the yards, and which is undoubtedly still going on. It should also be pointed out that work in the yards is extremely seasonal and that the "average number" of employees is an average lying between wide extremes. The number employed during the slack season, for example, is in some departments increased three-, four-, and even fivefold during the busy season. The average number of employees, therefore, is very much smaller than the number who are during the year dependent upon the great packing companies for employment. This difference between the average number and the total number employed explains a seeming discrepancy between the reports of the Illinois State Bureau of Labor and the United States Census. The Census reported 2,477 women employed, while the Bureau of Labor reported,⁸ as the result of a special investigation made less than a year after the Census, that 3,976 women were employed in the Chicago yards, or nearly nine-tenths as many women in Chicago alone as the Census reported for the entire United States. The Bureau of Labor, however, published statistics which show that, although the agents of the Bureau found nearly 4,000 women in the yards, the average number of women employed during the year was estimated by the employing companies to be only 2,261.

The work done by women in the yards can probably best be understood through an account of their work in a single plant. An attempt will be made, therefore, to describe in detail the work of the women employed in one establishment which, in its various departments, is in a measure typical of them all. The establishment selected for this purpose is one of the largest plants in the yards and one which is as well managed as any of the others, if not better managed. In this plant, which occupies eight city blocks, there are: a slaughtering establishment in which cattle, hogs, sheep, and calves are handled; a packing establishment⁹

⁸ *Fourteenth Biennial Report of the Illinois Bureau of Labor Statistics*, p. 287, and Table II, p. 173.

⁹ Methods have been devised for utilizing a greater variety of products from the hog than from cattle or sheep. The discussion largely refers, therefore, to processes in connection with the preparation of hog products.

in which meats, soup, pork and beans, and other canned food stuffs are put up; a factory in which the tin cans and lard pails are made; an extract room in which mince-meat and beef extract are prepared; a bone-room in which the bones are converted into buttons, knife handles, pipe stems, and other articles of similar character; a butterine establishment in which oleo-margarine and renovated butter are put up; a lard refinery; and a butter, cheese, and egg department; a laboratory in which medicinal properties are tested and substances claimed to have a therapeutic value are manufactured; an albumin department in which the albuminous portion of the blood is separated out for various uses in the industrial arts; a printing shop in which the advertisements are prepared, as well as several other departments in which women are not employed at all, such as the fertilizing plant, the wool house, and the car and machine shops.

The work of women in the slaughtering establishment is of special interest because this department is the most direct descendant of the old industry which belonged exclusively to men. Today this part of the new industry is still monopolized by men. No women are found in the "killing-room"¹⁰ or upon what is known as the "cutting-floor." After the hog has been slaughtered, cleaned, chilled, and cut into various shapes in which the fresh meat is put upon the market, certain portions which are not suitable for use in any other way but which have in them valuable nutritive matter are conveyed by machinery from the main cutting-floor to what is known as the trimming-room. Here for the first time the meat passes under the hands of women. There is no machinery used in the cutting; the women perform with a knife the very simple operation of separating the fat from the lean and both from any bones which may be found. The meat comes to them cold and after being trimmed is taken at once to a cold room. The charge is made that in some of the plants the rooms in which the women trimmers work are very cold, but in this establishment, the room in which

¹⁰ In another plant it is true that a few women are employed to stamp the carcass after it has been inspected and just before it leaves the room. Since these women are employed for a very specialized service and perform no operation in any way connected with killing, it seems to give a wrong impression to speak of them as actually employed in the killing-room.

the trimming is done is not chilled below 50 degrees. The women work by the piece in pairs and divide their earnings; each pair have their own pail and their own knives, are credited with what they do, and are able to earn relatively good wages when they are kept busy.

Women were not originally employed in the yards at work "where the knife is used," but a change of policy came about through the introduction of Slavic women in the meat-trimming and sausage department at times when the men who were regularly employed there were on strike. There seems to be a strong objection in the community to the employment of women in the trimming-room, on the ground that "handling the knife" is not women's work. It is difficult to justify this prejudice on any logical ground since it has always been recognized that a woman could suitably handle a knife in her own kitchen, or handle two knives anywhere if they were only fastened together in the shape of a pair of scissors. There is certainly nothing repulsive or offensive in the work which women do in the trimming-room except in so far as the handling of large quantities of uncooked food is always in some measure unpleasant. In this, as in all other rooms in the establishment where women handle meat, they are required to wear caps and aprons, which make the room and the work look more attractive than would otherwise be possible. The women stand or sit at long tables, working very much as they might if they were preparing a steak at a kitchen table except that they work here more skilfully and more persistently. These women have, of course, only left the individual kitchen to work in the great organized kitchen from which food supplies are distributed to all parts of the world. The local prejudice against women's work in the trimming-room is undoubtedly due not so much to the use of the knife as to the fear that un-American standards are being introduced. Only foreign-born women of the European peasant type accustomed to farm work in the old country are willing to do work of this character and, to the Irish-American employees, a degradation of the standard of women's work seems to be threatened.

Uncooked meat again passes under the hands of women in the sausage-room where men fill the casings with the aid of a machine and women link, rope, twist, and tie the sausages. Here also the women that have taken over work formerly done by men are comparatively recent immigrants—Polish, Lithuanian, and Bohemian girls for the most part. They are, however, younger on the whole than the women in the trimming-room, for their work requires more dexterous hands and quicker movements, while in the trimming-room, where the women trimmers not only “use the knife” but carry heavy pails of meat, physical strength rather than any special speed is required. Until the last decade the work of tying casings is said to have been done by rather old men who are kept as quasi-pensioners,¹¹ but when girls were tried on the work in time of strike they were found to work so much faster than the men that they were kept on indefinitely. In this room the employees are divided into groups called “benches.” A “bench” usually consists of two men and five girls and serves as the unit of payment; the whole “bench” is credited with the amount of meat which passes through their hands and they are paid for that amount according to certain specified rates. In such work as this, which is always piece work, the men at the machines are of course expected to set the pace; but the men are cautious about obtaining too high rate of speed lest an excessive productivity may lead to a cut in wages. However objectionable the handling of uncooked meat may be, it should be pointed out that both the trimming-room and the sausage-rooms are pleasanter than rooms in which there is the roar and jar of heavy machinery. The women and girls seem healthy and cheerful and they sing a good deal at their work; one of them described their singing as sounding “very much like church.”

These few women engaged in the trimming- and sausage-rooms are the only ones in the 4,000 employed in the yards who can be said to have taken over any part of what was men’s work under the older and more primitive system. In all of the pro-

¹¹ Commons, “Labor Conditions in Meat Packing and the Recent Strike,” *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, XIX, 19.

cesses connected with the preparation of cooked meats for the market and the manufacture of the great variety of by-products, both women and men are doing new work which has been created by the invention of machinery and the remarkable organization which has made possible the utilization of by-products. This work either did not exist at all under the old system or was performed by women in their kitchens.

In the canning department, where more girls are employed than in any other department in the yards, the number of women workers varies from 75 during the dull time to any number between 300 and 500 during the busy seasons. Here they handle not only cooked food but machinery; the processes of cutting, chipping, and packing the dried beef, bacon, and ham are carried on; and the cans and jars in which they are put up are painted, labeled, and wrapped.

This department is the one in which women were first employed in the yards. They were used at the start only to paint and label the cans and jars, tend the machine which cuts the beef, bacon, or ham, put the beef into the cans, and put tops on the cans. The work of soldering the cans is done only by men and boys in this establishment, but it is "girls' work" in some of the other plants. After the can is capped it passes through the vacuum machine, when it is ready to be painted, wrapped, and labeled. Since the cans are so varied in size and shape, the painting is done by hand instead of by machinery, and seems to be unpleasant work, although it is done in a room which is reasonably well lighted and aired. Painting, labeling, and wrapping are all piece work and are paid at a low rate, but the girls who do this work and who are generally American born of Polish descent acquire such a high degree of speed that, in spite of the low rates, they are able to earn fairly good wages during the time when they have full work. For wrapping, which is also piece work, the rates are even lower. In the soup and bean rooms, which also belong in this department, there are several minor occupations, such as peeling potatoes or vegetables, boning chicken, wiping cans, and other similarly unskilled work

for which the wages are very low, and at which older women are employed.

The manufacture of tin cans and lard pails is a subsidiary industry in the yards which employs a large number of women and girls. Their presence in this department is due to the strike of 1904, when a woman who became "forelady" organized them, instructed them, and brought them to the assistance of the employer. Before that time the work had been done by boys, but the girls proved to be more steady and quite as skilful, and the work became permanently theirs. The work here is like that in any other can factory, and while the girls perform a variety of processes such as stacking the pieces of tin and feeding machines, none of the work is either skilled or well paid.

In several departments the women perform only the work of packing the product after it is prepared. One of these is the extract department where the beef extract and soda-fountain supplies are canned, and the mince-meat wrapped and got ready for the market. Except during the busy season, which is in the early autumn when the mince-meat supply for the year is put up, there are only from 30 to 50 women employed. The rooms here are light, pleasant, and quiet because only very light machines are used.

Another packing process is carried on by the women in the "ham-curing" room, where the hams and bacons which have been smoked and prepared for use are sewed into cotton bags or wrapped in paper and tied. These bags, like the cans which are used for other products, are made by the company in a large room which serves as a combined sewing- and laundry-room. This is of course exclusively a woman's workroom. Power machines are used here for making not only the ham and bacon bags but the heavy cotton garments which the company furnishes to the butcher workmen. These men's garments, and the aprons and caps which are worn by the girls in the canning department and laundered by the company are ironed in this same room.

The departments and processes described up to this point

are all of them connected with the preparation or packing of what may be called direct products or meat products proper. Large numbers of women, however, are also employed in the manufacture of some of the by-products. In the "bone novelty" department, for example, women and girls are employed at a variety of processes and earn very good wages when they work full time. In this department the bones of the animal which are valuable for such uses are made into various forms for a world-wide market; trinkets are made to be sold to South African tribes or to our Indians in the Southwest to resell to curio-hunters; and the commoner forms of knife handles, buttons, and pipe stems are also manufactured here.

In the rooms where the women operate the machines which cut out the novelties, it is interesting that both men and women are employed, and they seem to be not only doing work of a similar character, but earning something like equal wages, a very unusual circumstance. Several years ago the rooms in this department were most offensive, and some of them are still unpleasant. The ventilation was wholly inadequate to carry off either the bone dust resulting from the machine work, or the gases and unpleasant odors arising from the grinding of wet bones. Methods of carrying off the dust and gases have been devised and the offensive character of the work in some places has been greatly lessened—an interesting example of what can be done to remove the nuisances which are often said to be inevitably connected with the different processes. In this department the women also cut, sort, and pack the novelties after they are made.

In connection with the manufacture of other by-products in the butterine, pepsin, and albumin departments a small number of women are employed along with a much larger number of men. In the butterine department, where oleomargarine and renovated butter are prepared, a few girls are employed to wrap and pack the pats after they have been made. The work of the men in this department is most of it skilled and well paid, while that of the girls is simple, unskilled, and of course not so well paid. The room is not agreeable because as yet no methods

have been devised by which handling grease can be rendered inoffensive.

In the laboratory or pepsin room there are various medical products manufactured, such as pepsin in its various forms, and other extracts from the intestines of the hog which have been found to have valuable curative properties. Only a very few girls are employed here and the work which they do is of the most unskilled character and is poorly paid. A few women, all Polish and Bohemian immigrants, are also employed in the albumin department where the air is heavy and offensive and the workrooms unpleasant.

To summarize briefly this account of the work done by women in a single stockyards plant,¹² it may be said that approximately 800 women and girls are employed in this one establishment—200 in the trimming- and sausage-rooms, 500 in the canning department, and 100 in miscellaneous departments or in the manufacture of by-products. The great majority of girls perform simple mechanical processes such as are carried on in large numbers of factories all over the city and country. If the canning department, for example, were outside of the yards, the character of the work would not distinguish it from thousands of other factories. It remains, however, in the yards, surrounded by the ugly sights and sounds and the offensive smells that are characteristic of these great slaughterhouses.

The question of women's wages in the yards is complicated by the fact that the work is not merely seasonal, but extremely

¹² The soap and glue works, which are outside of the yards, employ more than 200 women, but they are not included in the discussion because they are not technically a part of the industry in the yards, although closely connected with the packing-house which has been described. The glue works are surrounded by a community similar in character to that surrounding the stockyards. The girls coming from this immediate neighborhood would probably find it difficult to go elsewhere to get work, and are content with low wages. The work requires a minimum amount of skill, and a considerable number of girls between the ages of 14 and 16 are employed.

Girls here are employed in connection with the preparation of sand paper and the making, packing, and wrapping of soap, of which there are three varieties, known as "laundry," "transparent," and "toilet." They are also employed in the making and packing of gelatine, which can be prepared only in the cold weather, and in the preparation of glue. In the latter occupation the women are almost all older than in the other departments and non-English-speaking. Girls are also employed in the preparation of curled hair, where they untwist the hair which has already been twisted, and which, after being pressed and cut, is ready for use in cushions and mattresses.

irregular during all seasons. The day's work in the yards is supposed to be one consisting of ten hours, but although the day's work is spoken of as though it were a unit there is, so far as the women are concerned, practically no such thing as a day's work in any one of the establishments. The worker is engaged and paid by the hour, or even by the half-hour; that is, she is paid for just what work she has done and divisions as small as the half-hour are reckoned. Although the rate of payment may be one that would mean good wages if the worker had a full day's work six days in the week, it means very low wages if the woman is obliged to go home at two o'clock every day during a large portion of the year. Before the passage of the ten-hour law, overtime was common during certain days in the week and slack work or no work at all on other days.¹³ Some interesting data regarding regularity of work, method of payment, weekly wages, and yearly earnings have been recently published by the Illinois Bureau of Statistics.¹⁴

Table III (p. 646), compiled from these data, relates to 451 women employed in seven different establishments and furnishes some very interesting information with regard to the question of how the women were paid.

According to this table more than half of all the women are paid by the hour and on days when there is only enough work to last for a few hours their earnings are, of course, very small. In three establishments a few women who were undoubtedly "foreladies" were paid by the week and in one establishment 50 women were paid by the day. In the great majority of cases, however, when the women were not paid by the hour, they were paid by the piece or by a combination of piece and hour wages which made the worker pay heavy costs for any slackness in work. Evidence regarding the seasonal character of the work is found

¹³ There undoubtedly are a few exceptions to this statement, but Table III on p. 646, compiled from data published by the State Bureau of Labor, shows how infrequent these exceptions are. Forewomen are of course paid weekly wages.

¹⁴ *Fourteenth Biennial Report*. These data were collected by special agents who secured schedules from both employers and wage-earners. The report contains the following definite comment on their reliability: "The results presented, concerning working time, wages, working conditions, and earnings, were secured from the books of the establishment visited, and subsequently corroborated in every particular by the individual employee" (p. 171).

in Tables IV and V, which show the total number unemployed for one week or more because there was "no work," together with the actual number of weeks of enforced idleness.

TABLE III
METHODS OF WAGE-PAYMENT IN THE CHICAGO STOCKYARDS*

METHOD OF PAYMENT	NUMBER OF WOMEN PAID AS SPECIFIED IN							TOTAL ALL ESTAB.	PER-CENTAGE
	Estab. A	Estab. B	Estab. C	Estab. D	Estab. E	Estab. F	Estab. G		
By the week.....	1	3	4	..	..	..	..	8	1.8
By the day.....	..	..	50	..	..	..	..	50	11.4
By the hour.....	84	129	2	15	12	3	4	249	56.7
By the piece.....	3	1	15	33	15	11	8	86	19.6
By the piece and hour.....	45	..	..	1	..	..	..	46	10.5
Total reported	133	133	71	49	27	14	12	439	100.0
No report.....	7	5	..	..	..	..	..	12	..
Total.....	140	138	71	49	27	14	12	451	100.0

* This and the following tables are compiled from data published in the *Fourteenth Biennial Report Illinois State Bureau of Labor*, pp. 290-300.

TABLE IV
NUMBER OF WOMEN IDLE ONE WEEK OR MORE AND CAUSE OF NOT WORKING

ESTABLISHMENT	EMPLOYED 52 WEEKS	NUMBER OF WOMEN WHO WERE NOT EMPLOYED 52 WEEKS BECAUSE OF						TOTAL	COUNTED TWICE	CORRECT TOTAL
		"No Work"	Sickness	Vacation	At Home	New Workers	No Report			
A.....	11	79	5	6	33	24	19	177	37	140
B.....	2	72	7	27	3	27	25	173	35	138
C.....	5	24	1	5	0	35	1	71	..	71
D.....	46	1	..	1	..	1	..	49	..	49
E.....	12	1	..	..	1	12	1	27	..	27
F.....	1	3	..	..	..	10	1	14	1	14
G.....	1	2	..	..	..	9	1	13	1	12
Total.	78	182	13	39	37	118	58	525	74	451

According to Table IV, only 78 out of 451 women worked 52 weeks; of the remaining 399, 39 reported that they took vacations at their own expense, 37 that they stayed at home voluntarily, and 13 that they stayed away because of sickness; 118

were women who had not been employed by the company long enough to have worked 52 weeks; and 182, the largest number of those who did not work full time, were women who did not work because there was no work for them. To stay at home from 1 to 20 weeks, and even longer, because of a slack season and then to work only a portion of the day during a large part of the year means not only low yearly earnings but low yearly earnings irregularly distributed. For it should be emphasized

TABLE V

NUMBER OF WEEKS LOST BY 182 WOMEN UNEMPLOYED BECAUSE OF "NO WORK,"
I. E., SEASONAL CHARACTER OF THE WORK

Weeks Lost	Estab. A	Estab. B	Estab. C	Estab. D	Estab. E	Estab. F	Estab. G	Total	Total Weeks Lost
1 week.....	36	15	5	..	..	I	2	59	59
2 weeks.....	8	29	I	..	I	..	..	39	78
3 weeks.....	10	15	3	I	..	..	..	29	87
4 weeks.....	11	2	3	..	..	I	..	17	68
5 weeks.....	I	2	2	..	..	..	..	5	25
6 weeks.....	2	I	I	..	..	I	..	5	30
7 weeks.....	2	I	2	..	..	..	..	5	35
8 weeks.....	..	2	..	..	..	..	..	2	16
9 weeks.....	..	..	I	..	..	..	..	I	9
10 weeks.....	3	..	I	..	..	..	..	4	40
11 weeks.....	..	..	I	..	..	..	..	I	11
12 weeks.....	I	..	..	..	..	..	..	I	12
13 weeks.....	..	I	I	..	..	..	..	2	26
14 weeks.....	2	I	..	..	..	..	..	3	42
15 weeks.....	..	..	I	..	..	..	..	I	15
16 weeks.....	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
17 weeks.....	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
18 weeks.....	I	..	I	..	..	..	..	2	36
19 weeks.....	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
20 weeks or more..	*2	3	I	..	..	..	..	6	120
Total.....	79	72	24	I	I	3	2	182	709

* Of the six in this group, two lost 20 weeks, and the other four lost 22, 26, 33, and 34 weeks respectively.

that the girl who earns a low but regular weekly wage is much better off than a girl who earns a large wage during exceptional weeks and during other weeks low wages or none at all.

Further definite evidence of the irregularity of the work is to be found in the wide difference between the highest and lowest wages received by the same worker. In Table VI, which

relates to a single establishment, the highest and lowest wages, together with other data relating to earnings, are given for one worker in each of the large occupational groups.

The data given in Table VI are sufficient to indicate how far the highest wages, which are so often given as examples of women's wages in the yards, are from the average wage taken over a year's time. An occasional week's earnings may be high,

TABLE VI
DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HIGHEST, LOWEST, AND AVERAGE WEEKLY WAGES IN
DIFFERENT OCCUPATIONAL GROUPS IN A SINGLE ESTABLISHMENT, TOGETHER
WITH TOTAL YEARLY EARNINGS*

WORKER	WEEKLY WAGES		TOTAL EARNINGS FOR THE YEAR	WEEKS EMPLOYED	WEEKLY WAGES AVERAGE FOR YEAR
	Highest	Lowest			
Feeder.....	\$7.52	\$4.50	\$303.00	49†	\$6.18
Glue worker.....	6.30	4.45	233.00	50§	4.66
Linker.....	9.90	4.90	376.00	52	7.23
Machine operator...	5.90	3.85	251.00	50||	5.02
Packer.....	3.10	2.60	145.00	49†	2.96
Sorter.....	5.75	2.20	209.00	49†	4.27
Tier.....	9.80	4.95	243.00	40†	6.08
Trimmer.....	9.05	4.30	299.00	49‡	6.10
Weigher.....	5.00	2.40	148.00	40§	3.70
Wiper.....	4.90	3.75	222.00	49‡	4.53
Wrapper.....	6.00	.75	263.00	51†	5.16

* This list might be extended indefinitely, since all of the data in the report are presented in this way. In order to make a typical and at the same time a fair selection, which should include both well paid and poorly paid workers, the first worker in each group that included as many as five workers was selected except in cases where the first worker was a so-called "new worker" who had no opportunity to work 52 weeks in this plant or where no report as to the different items was given. In such cases the next worker was taken.

† Not employed 52 weeks because there was "no work."

§ Not employed 52 weeks but reason for unemployment not given; report merely is that the woman was "at home."

|| Not employed 52 weeks because of illness.

‡ Not employed 52 weeks because of "no work" one week and illness two weeks.

but the total earnings for the year are low. In this establishment only two employees averaged as much as \$10 a week and none as much as \$11. A more accurate statement, however, of the actual wages earned by all of the workers from whom data were collected in all of the establishments is presented in Table VII. This table is compiled from the reports of the average weekly wages earned by 451 women throughout the

year. It is important to note that this is a bona fide average obtained by dividing the actual earnings by the actual number of weeks employed.

Table VII shows clearly that the women who average through the year \$7 a week or more are only the exceptional workers. More than one-third of all the women whose earnings are reported earn less than \$5 a week; nearly two-thirds (63 per cent) of them earn less than \$6; 82 per cent of them

TABLE VII
AVERAGE WEEKLY WAGES OF 451 WOMEN EMPLOYED IN CHICAGO STOCKYARDS

WEEKLY WAGES	NUMBER OF WOMEN EARNING SPECIFIED WAGES IN							TOTAL NUMBER	PER- CENTAGE
	Estab. A	Estab. B	Estab. C	Estab. D	Estab. E	Estab. F	Estab. G		
\$2 and under \$3..	2	1	..	..	..	..	..	3	0.7
3 and under 4..	18	7	5	..	1	..	..	31	7.1
4 and under 5..	33	38	17	..	2	1	3	94	21.6
5 and under 6..	30	42	24	11	9	2	4	122	28.0
6 and under 7..	20	11	17	25	2	2	3	80	18.4
7 and under 8..	12	8	3	6	4	3	1	37	8.5
8 and under 9..	8	11	4	5	3	2	..	33	7.6
9 and under 10..	4	7	1	1	3	2	1	19	4.4
10 and under 11..	2	3	..	..	2	2	..	9	2.1
11 and under 12..	..	2	..	1	1	..	..	4	0.9
12 and under 13..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	....
13 and under 14..	..	2	..	..	..	..	..	2	0.5
14 and under 15..	..	1	..	..	..	..	..	1	0.2
Total reported	129	133	71	49	27	14	12	435	100.0
No report.....	11	5	..	..	..	..	..	16	....
Total.....	140	138	71	49	27	14	12	451	100.0

earn less than \$7. It is of course clear that this does not mean that the nominal weekly wage is as low as these figures indicate but that, no matter what the nominal wage may be, the irregularity of work is so great that the actual wage is low when a period of time long enough to include slack as well as busy seasons is taken into account.

Something more should be said, perhaps, about the women themselves and the question of how far they are able through their own efforts to improve the conditions under which they work. It has already been pointed out that they are for the

most part foreign-born women—Polish, Lithuanian, Bohemian, Galician. Some of these are English-speaking and a few are the American-born daughters of Slavic immigrants, for the Slavic settlements in the neighborhood of the yards are old enough to be sending their American-born children to work. Very few Irish or Irish-American girls are left in the ranks, but the “foreladies” are almost invariably Irish women who have been working there for terms of ten, twelve, fifteen, or even a longer period of years.

In the yards as in most other places where women are employed in this country, the so-called problem of “women’s work” is really a problem of girls’ work, for the great majority of our wage-earning women are young unmarried women between the ages of sixteen and twenty-two. The older women who work in the yards are usually widows. There are a few married women who have no children, and a few with children whose husbands have deserted, but a woman with both husband and children is rarely found. An exceptional case is that of a man and his wife who were so thrifty that they both continued to work in the yards although they owned the tenement in which they lived and had six boarders and five children, the eldest about five years old and the youngest in the cradle.

The question of how far the women may improve their own condition through organization is one which might be raised, but there are of course untold difficulties in the way of organization when the workers are so largely foreign. The Irish and Irish-American girls employed in the yards have been at times very energetic but on the whole singularly unsuccessful in the attempt to gain anything in this way. Trade unionism has had a black history in the Chicago stockyards. “For fifteen years after the Knights of Labor strike in 1886 every man or woman who ventured to start an organization was discharged; and after 1890, when the ‘combine’ of packers became effective, many of them were blacklisted.”¹⁵ The women seem to have had

¹⁵ Commons, “Labor Conditions in Meat Packing and the Recent Strike,” *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, XIX, 1.

little or no part in the "sympathetic and unorganized" strike of 1894 and, indeed, the women in the meat-trimming rooms were then introduced to take the places of the men who went out.¹⁶ In 1900, however, the women went on an unorganized strike as a protest against the reduction of piece-work rates with the increase in speed. But as Slavic women had taken the places of men-strikers in the sausage- and trimming-rooms, so here they were introduced to take the places of Irish-American girls who went on strike in the canning-rooms. The result was that the girl strikers found themselves not only defeated but blacklisted.¹⁷ The experience of these blacklisted girls was in some respects very illuminating. So limited had their industrial experience been that when they found they could no longer obtain employment in the yards, they seemed actually to believe that the entire world of industry was closed to them. "Going down town to get work" was like going to a strange country, and seemed to require greater courage than they could command.

It was only two years, however, before a bona-fide girls' union was organized, and although the fourteen charter members were almost immediately discharged, the union continued to grow, and had about 1,200 members at the time of the strike of 1904. The most interesting event in the history of the women's union was the stand made in the Cincinnati Convention in 1904 when the men proposed that the women who had been taken on during a former strike to do what was considered "men's work" in the sausage- and trimming-rooms should go and their places be given back to men. The girls who were present as delegates made a firm protest against the drawing of any arbitrary line between women's work and men's work. They refused to agree that "the use of the knife" restricted any occupation to men. They agreed, however, that the women should be paid the same wages as the men even if women's labor should be so unprofitable under these conditions as to necessitate their discharge.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 20.

¹⁷ See the account in Professor Commons' article (*ibid.*, 21) of the unsuccessful damage suit which nine of the blacklisted girls brought against the four leading companies.

No discussion of the work of the yards can be satisfactory which does not give some account of the obvious physical characteristics of the yards and of the surrounding influences in the community known as "Packingtown," in which it is estimated that 45,000 of Chicago's population are earning a livelihood. Packingtown has long been the home of nuisances. Originally a great undrained swamp, it has been reclaimed for offensive purposes. One great tract is devoted to slaughtering and the industries built upon it, and beyond the yards to the west is another great tract set apart for the city garbage dump. Below the dump and serving in a defective way for purposes of drainage in the yards is a nauseous branch of the Chicago River known as "Bubbly Creek." It is not, therefore, surprising that in this part of the city the air is always full of indescribably offensive odors which come from the dumps, from "Bubbly Creek," from the thousands of live animals awaiting slaughter as well as from the processes connected with slaughtering and packing and the manipulation of "fertilizer."

Within the yards there are ugly sights which are a nuisance equally with the smoke and the smells. Some of the streets which pass through the yards in both directions are kept fairly clean, but many of them are not paved, and these it is impossible to keep clean. Over some there are elevated tracks or bridges connecting the different portions of the various plants. Passing along many of them travel wagons which are loaded with offensive burdens. A most hideous load of crimson heads, for example, may not infrequently be seen traveling from the north to the south end of the yards, without any attempt at concealment. Some of the plants are much less careful than others in covering the unsightly products which must be conveyed from one place to another, and on the whole a general disregard of appearances still prevails. The packing-houses are for the most part old frame buildings, the result of an unconscious growth, erected without an adequate plan for the future, and added to from time to time as the great industry took on larger and larger proportions. The dark passageways, long wooden stairways,

and apparently involved means of entrance and exit seem to an outsider intricate and bewildering.

Attention is called to these physical characteristics of the yards, because without a knowledge of the common sights and odors by which they are surrounded and the physical influences to which they are constantly subjected, no adequate idea of the conditions under which the workers are employed can be obtained.

These objectionable physical surroundings will undoubtedly be changed. The new office buildings which have already been erected have grass plots and gardens, and it is only a question of time when something known as welfare work or social work will be undertaken. In a few of the establishments many of the women already have workrooms with adequate light and air, in some they have proper toilet accommodations and rest-rooms, in one a lunch-room, and in one medical attendance. If there are some slight indications that welfare work is on its way it must not be forgotten that no improvement in physical surroundings will make up for low wages and irregularity of work.

In conclusion it may be said by way of summary that the women are found only in the most unskilled occupations, and that the little skilled work that is still connected with the preparation of a large portion of our food supplies is "men's work"; the men do not only the killing but the cooking. For the women there is practically no opportunity for advancement, either in responsibility or wages. Except for the positions of 'forewoman and certain minor positions like those of the "tally-girls" or "scalers," where facility and steadiness find a somewhat certain reward, there is no chance for promotion. On the whole, therefore, it seems fair to say that the work here seems to be of a most undesirable character¹⁸ when one considers the ugly and offensive surroundings, the seasonal character of the work and its irregularity during all seasons of the year, the low wages, the unskilled character of the occupations in which women are

¹⁸ Reference is made to the *Report on Condition of Woman and Child Wage-Earners in the United States*, Vol. V, published since this article was in type, for interesting confirmation of these views.

employed, the absence of any training in the work, and the lack of any industrial future for the worker. It must be emphasized again that large numbers of the women workers are recently arrived immigrants,¹⁹ whose only alternative work is low-grade domestic service or heavy cleaning work in restaurants and other public places. Unable even to speak the English language, unskilled and untrained in our domestic habits, they still find themselves without much difficulty adjusted to a situation calling only for the acquisition of facility in a single set of muscles and surrounded by a group of associates on whom intellectual demands of the same low order are made.

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¹⁹ The records of the Immigrants' Protective League for the past two years show that 222 newly arrived immigrant girls went to work in the yards immediately after their arrival. The nationality of these girls was as follows: Polish, 130; Lithuanian, 64; Slovak, 8; Ruthenian, 6; Croatian, 5; Bohemian, 4; Hungarian (Magyar), 3; German, 1; Irish, 1; total, 222.